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DE RUEHAH #1671 3640957  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 300957Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3979  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6056  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3750  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3609  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4298  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4235

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001671

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN; PPD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/30/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: NEARING END OF STUDENT SAGA?

REF: ASHGABAT 1662

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1 (C) During the official Turkmenistan government New Year's party on December 29, Charge pulled aside Deputy Chairman for Education and Health Hydyr Saparlyev and pressed him regarding the Turkmenistan American Scholarship Program (TASP) student issue. Since late July, TASP students who formerly studied at the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek have been prevented from leaving the country for any reason. Charge asked Saparlyev when the TASP student problem would be resolved. Saparlyev responded, "January." During a December 25 meeting, Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov had promised Charge that he would raise the matter with Saparlyev to see if it could be settled (reftel).

12. (C) COMMENT: It's not over until it's over is fitting everywhere, but especially is the case in Turkmenistan. While Saparlyev is not to be trusted, the fact that he gave a timeframe is hopeful. We will continue to press. Saparlyev played the major role in putting the students on the blacklist and must remove them. It is likely that Meredov did speak to Saparlyev following the meeting with Charge. Charge had suggested to Meredov that the "perfect solution" would be to settle this no later than January so that the students could start winter semester at the American University in Bulgaria. END COMMENT.  
CURRAN